

REMOTE CONTROL SYSTEM USING A CELLULAR TELEPHONE
AND ASSOCIATED METHODS

Related Applications

This application is based upon prior filed
copending provisional application No. 60/226,854 filed
August 22, 2000, and provisional application No.

5 60/247,131 filed November 10, 2000, the entire
disclosures of which are incorporated herein by
reference.

Field of the Invention

The present invention relates to control
10 systems, and more particularly, to a remote control
system, such as for a vehicle, and which uses a
cellular telephone as a remote transmitter for
transmitting control signals.

Background of the Invention

15 Many vehicles include a security system,
remote keyless entry system, and/or remote start system
which permit a user to perform a function when away
from the vehicle. For example, the security system may
20 be switched between armed and disarmed modes by
operation of a small handheld remote transmitter.
Similarly, remote keyless entry and remote engine
starting features can be similarly performed using a

suitable remote transmitter. Typically such transmitters are dedicated and sold as part of the overall remote control system. Such systems can be factory installed or added as aftermarket accessories.

5 A number of patents relate to using a cellular telephone as a remote transmitter for operating a vehicle control system, such as for example, U.S. Patent No. 5,612,878 to Joao et al. In other words, in such a system, the cellular telephone
10 can be used as the remote transmitter to control a function at the vehicle.

Similarly, U.S. Patent No. 5,815,557 to Larson also discloses a cellular telephone which transmits to a lock and wherein the user operates the
15 buttons of the telephone as he would buttons on a key card to gain access to the secured area. U.S. Patent No. 5,276,728 to Pagliaroli et al. discloses a vehicle security system including a short range portable transmitter that may be used to transmit a command code
20 to the receiver which may be in the same frequency ranges as the cellular telephone transmitters. U.S. Patent Nos. 5,370,201 to Inubshi, 5,535,844 to Samford, and 5,917,405 to Joao also disclose a cellular telephone communicating with a receiver at the vehicle.

25 Unfortunately, none of the above identified prior art patents address how a cellular telephone or its associated vehicle receiver can be configured to operate together easily and while providing security from unauthorized operation by other cellular
30 telephones. In addition, these cellular telephones typically require the use of intervening cellular communications infrastructure, i.e., relay towers or base stations, when used as a remote transmitter. The

use of relay towers or base stations by a cellular telephone often results in an expense to the user.

Summary of the Invention

In view of the foregoing background, it is
5 therefore an object of the invention to provide a remote control system and related methods with an enhanced security of operation.

Another object of the invention is to avoid being charged by the cellular network provider when
10 using a cellular telephone as a remote transmitter.

These and other objects, features and advantages in accordance with the present invention are provided by a vehicle remote control system to be operated directly via a cellular telephone without
15 using intervening cellular communications infrastructure. The cellular telephone comprises an input device, such as a keypad for example, and a transmitter for transmitting signals relating to a command code entered from the input device and a unique
20 identification code for the cellular telephone.

The vehicle remote control system comprises a receiver positioned at the vehicle for receiving signals directly from the cellular telephone without using intervening cellular communications
25 infrastructure, and a controller also positioned at the vehicle that is switchable between a learning mode and an operating mode.

When the controller is in the learning mode, the controller learns the unique identification code of
30 a cellular telephone so that the cellular telephone is an authorized cellular telephone. When the controller is in the operating mode, the controller controls at

least one vehicle function responsive to signals received from the authorized cellular telephone. The controller may be switchable to the learning mode responsive to a user operable switch connected thereto,
5 or a user operable in combination with at least one vehicle device.

A cellular telephone is advantageously used to transmit signals to the remote control system so that the transmission range may be further than
10 provided by typical handheld remote transmitters. The user does need not to carry both a cellular telephone and a handheld remote transmitter since the cellular telephone is used for both conventional calls and remote vehicle operations.

15 In addition, since the cellular telephone transmits signals to the remote control system without using intervening cellular communications infrastructure, i.e., without using relay towers or base stations, the user will avoid being charged for
20 transmitting such signals. This is possible when the controller is selectively responsive to command codes from the cellular telephone having less than seven digits. That is, the command code is less than a typical seven digit telephone number so that a cellular
25 telephone relay tower or base station does not recognize the command code as such, and consequently, will not process the call. Even though the cellular telephone transmits signals directly to the remote control system without using intervening cellular
30 communications infrastructure, the cellular telephone communicates with the intervening cellular communications infrastructure (i.e., one or more relay stations and/or a base station) so that the cellular

telephone is operational. Once the cellular telephone is operational, then the command code and the unique identification signal may be directly transmitted to the remote control system.

5 The controller may cooperate with the receiver to learn the unique identification code of the cellular telephone by wireless reception from the cellular telephone. To prevent the controller from learning a unique identification code from adjacent
10 cellular telephones when in the learning mode, the receiver has a controllable sensitivity. When the receiver has a reduced sensitivity, the cellular telephone must be placed closely adjacent the receiver when in the learning mode.

15 Another embodiment of the present invention is to interface the cellular telephone via a cable to an electrical connector on the controller to learn the unique identification code. In other words, an RF transmission from the cellular telephone may be avoided
20 when the controller learns the unique identification code of the cellular telephone.

Various embodiments of the controller are provided for the vehicle remote control system. In one embodiment the controller comprises a security
25 controller switchable between armed and disarmed modes responsive to signals from an authorized cellular telephone. In another embodiment, the controller comprises a door lock controller for locking or unlocking at least one vehicle door responsive to
30 signals from an authorized cellular telephone. In yet another embodiment, the controller comprises an engine start controller for starting a vehicle engine

responsive to signals from an authorized cellular telephone.

Another aspect of the invention is a method for vehicle remote control directly via a cellular
5 telephone without using intervening cellular communications infrastructure. As discussed above, the cellular telephone includes an input device and a transmitter for transmitting signals relating to a command code entered from the input device and a unique
10 identification code for the cellular telephone.

The method preferably includes receiving signals directly from the cellular telephone at the vehicle without using intervening cellular communications infrastructure, and switching the
15 controller positioned at the vehicle to a learning mode and learning the unique identification code of a cellular telephone so that the cellular telephone is an authorized cellular telephone. The method preferably further includes switching the controller to an
20 operating mode and controlling at least one vehicle function responsive to signals received from the authorized cellular telephone.

Another aspect of a remote control system according to the invention is directed to a door
25 opening system. The door opening system, such as a garage door, is to be operated directly via a cellular telephone without using intervening cellular communications infrastructure.

Yet another aspect of the remote control
30 system is directed to a building security system to be operated directly via a cellular telephone without using intervening cellular communications infrastructure. The building controller may be

switchable between an armed mode for generating an alarm responsive to a building sensor, and a disarmed mode. In addition, the building controller may also be connected to at least at least one door lock for
5 unlocking the door lock responsive to the signals received from the authorized cellular telephone.

Brief Description of the Drawings

FIG. 1 is a schematic diagram of a vehicle remote control system in accordance with the present
10 invention.

FIG. 2 is a schematic diagram of a vehicle remote control system including a security controller in accordance with the present invention.

FIG. 3 is a schematic diagram of a vehicle
15 remote control system including a door lock controller in accordance with the present invention.

FIG. 4 is a schematic diagram of a vehicle remote control system including an engine start controller in accordance with the present invention.

FIG. 5 is a flowchart illustrating a method
20 for vehicle remote control directly via a cellular telephone in accordance with the present invention.

FIG. 6 is a schematic diagram of a remote control system for opening a garage door in accordance
25 with the present invention.

FIG. 7 is a schematic diagram of a remote control system for granting access to a building in accordance with the present invention.

Detailed Description of the Preferred Embodiments

30 The present invention will now be described more fully hereinafter with reference to the

accompanying drawings in which preferred embodiments of the invention are shown. This invention may, however, be embodied in many different forms and should not be construed as limited to the illustrated embodiments set forth herein. Rather, these embodiments are provided so that this disclosure will be thorough and complete, and will fully convey the scope of the invention to those skilled in the art. Like numbers refer to like elements throughout. Prime and multiple prime notation are used in alternate embodiments to indicate similar elements.

A vehicle remote control system **10** in accordance with the present invention will be described with reference to FIGS. 1-5. The vehicle remote control system **10** is operated directly via a cellular telephone **12** without using intervening cellular communications infrastructure, i.e., without using relay towers or base stations. However, those of skill in the art will readily appreciate that the cellular telephone **12** is in communications with the intervening cellular communications infrastructure so that the cellular telephone is active (i.e., operational). Once the cellular telephone **12** is active, communication with the vehicle remote control system **10** is performed without using the intervening cellular communications infrastructure. The cellular telephone **12** includes an input device, such as a keypad **14** for example, and a transmitter included therein for transmitting signals relating to a command code entered from the keypad, and a unique identification code for the cellular telephone.

The remote control system **10** includes a receiver **15** positioned at the vehicle **16** with an antenna **34** connected thereto for receiving signals

directly from the cellular telephone 12 without using
intervening cellular communications infrastructure. A
controller 18 is also positioned at the vehicle 16 and
is switchable between a learning mode and an operating
5 mode. When the controller 18 is in the learning mode,
the controller learns the unique identification code of
the cellular telephone 12 so that the cellular
telephone is an authorized cellular telephone.

When the controller 18 is in the operating
10 mode, the controller controls at least one vehicle
function responsive to signals received from the
authorized cellular telephone 12. The at least one
vehicle function is supported by the vehicle device 32
connected to the controller 18. The at least one
15 vehicle function may include switching between armed
and disarmed modes, remotely locking and unlocking the
vehicle doors, or remote engine starting.

As will be discussed in greater detail below,
the vehicle remote control system 10 includes various
20 embodiments. In one embodiment, the controller 18 is a
security controller 18' that switches between armed and
disarmed modes responsive to signals from the cellular
telephone 12. In another embodiment, the controller 18
is a door lock controller 18'' for locking or unlocking
25 at least one vehicle door 28 responsive to signals from
the cellular telephone 12. In a third embodiment, the
controller 18 is an engine start controller 18''' for
starting a vehicle engine responsive to signals from
the cellular telephone 12.

30 A cellular telephone 12 is advantageously
used to transmit signals to the remote control system
10 so that the transmission range may be further than

provided by typical handheld remote transmitters. The user does need not to carry both a cellular telephone **12** and a handheld remote transmitter since the cellular telephone is used for both conventional calls and
5 remote vehicle operations.

In addition, since the cellular telephone **12** transmits signals to the remote control system **10** without using intervening cellular communications infrastructure, i.e., without using relay towers or
10 base stations, the user will avoid being charged for transmitting such signals. Even though the cellular telephone **12** must register with the intervening cellular communications infrastructure, this is possible when the controller **18** is selectively
15 responsive to command codes from the cellular telephone **12** having less than seven digits. That is, the command code is less than a typical seven digit telephone number so that a cellular telephone relay tower or base station does not recognize the command code as a
20 telephone number. The learning mode of the controller **18** for learning the unique codes of the cellular telephone **12** will be discussed in greater detail below.

In the illustrated embodiment of FIG. 2, a security controller **18'** is connected to a number of
25 security sensors **20a'-20n'**, which may include door, trunk, and/or hood pin switches, as well as shock, proximity, or other types of sensors as will be understood by those skilled in the art. The security controller **18'** monitors the sensors **20a'-20n'** and if
30 the security controller is in an armed mode, for example, a sensor **20a'-20n'** may trigger an alarm indicator at the vehicle **16**. If the security controller **18'** is in the disarmed mode, an alarm

indicator is not generated, and normal operation of the vehicle 16 is typically permitted.

The security controller 18' may be switched between armed and disarmed modes to permit operation by the user (disarmed mode), and to protect the vehicle 16 when the user is away from the vehicle (armed mode). An authorized cellular telephone 12 is used to switch the security controller 18' between the armed and disarmed modes. The security controller 18' may also include a passive arming feature which automatically arms the controller based upon the user exiting the vehicle 16.

The security controller 18' may also be connected to an engine disable circuit or device 24' which can prevent or disable starting and/or running of the vehicle engine. This would typically be used when an alarm was triggered by one or more of the security sensors 20a'-20n'.

An audible indicator 22', such as the vehicle horn or a siren, is also illustratively connected to the security controller 18'. The audible indicator 22' is used to sound an alarm condition, for example, but is also used to provide an audible indication that the security controller 18' has been commanded or has already changed modes. The audible confirmation indication is usually of short duration and/or amplitude and is typically known as a confirmation chirp.

Vehicle lights 26' are also illustratively connected to the security controller 18'. The lights 26' may be flashed during an alarm indication. In addition, the lights 26' may also be flashed along with

the confirmation chirp when the security controller 18' is switched between armed and disarmed modes. For example, one audible chirp and light flash may be given to confirm that the security controller 18' has been
5 switched to the armed mode. Two flashes and chirps may be used to indicate that the security controller 18' has been disarmed. Other combinations are also possible as will be appreciated by those skilled in the art.

10 In the illustrated embodiment, power door locks 28' may also be connected to the security controller 18'. For example, the security controller 18' could cause the power door locks 28' to move to the unlocked position when the user returns to the vehicle
15 16 and switches the controller to the disarmed mode. Conversely, the security controller 18' could move the door locks 30' to the locked position upon the user switching the controller to the armed mode.

Placing the security controller 18' in the
20 learning mode will now be discussed. The vehicle remote control system 10' further includes a user operable switch 30' connected to the security controller 18'. The user operable switch 30' is preferably hidden from view within the vehicle 16,
25 e.g., under the dash, yet is readily accessible by the user. The security controller 18' is switchable to the learning mode responsive to the user operable switch 30'. A designated switch, such as a valet switch, for example, can be used to cause the security controller
30 18' to switch to the learning mode.

In another embodiment, the security controller 18' is switchable to the learning mode

responsive to the user operable switch 30' and responsive to at least one vehicle device 32'. The at least one vehicle device 32' may include trunk, door and hood switches, and even the ignition switch, for example. The function of these vehicle devices 32' may overlap a portion of the illustrated sensors 20a'-20n'. The designated switch 30' in combination with a vehicle device 32' can be used to cause the security controller 18' to switch to the learning mode.

10 The receiver 15' has a controllable sensitivity so that when the security controller 18' is in the learning mode, the controller reduces the sensitivity of the receiver. Consequently, the cellular telephone 12 must be placed closely adjacent
15 the antenna 34' of the receiver 15' so that when the user presses 'SEND' on the keypad 15' of the cellular telephone, the security controller 18' learns the unique identification code of the cellular telephone.

By reducing the sensitivity of the receiver
20 15', this avoids the security controller 18' from learning a unique identification code from adjacent cellular telephones. Once this has been performed, the cellular telephone 12 becomes an authorized cellular telephone so that when the security controller 18' is
25 in the operating mode, it is switchable between armed and disarmed modes.

As readily understood by one skilled in the art, a typical cellular telephone 12 sends coded identifying information along with the speech
30 information. The coded identifying information includes, for U.S. cellular telephones, for example, an electronic serial number (ESN) and a mobile

identification number (MIN), with each transmission. The ESN corresponds to the unique identification code of the cellular telephone **12**, for example. The ESN may be fixed but not unique, while the MIN is typically
 5 unique. The MIN is typically the phone number for the cellular telephone **12**, for example.

However, as noted above, the security controller **18'** may be selectively responsive to command codes having less than seven digits from the cellular
 10 telephone **12**. This is done so that when the cellular telephone **12** transmits signals to the remote control system **10'**, it is done without using intervening cellular communications infrastructure.

When the security controller **18'** is in the
 15 operating mode, the controller controls at least one vehicle function by switching between armed and disarmed modes responsive to signals received from the authorized cellular telephone **12**. In other words, the security controller **18'** is responsive to a particular
 20 command code transmitted by the cellular telephone **12**. For example, pressing "1" and then "SEND" may switch the security controller **18'** to an armed mode, whereas pressing "2" and then "SEND" may switch the security controller to a disarm mode. The security controller
 25 **18'** compares the unique identification code transmitted by the cellular telephone **12** to a learned unique identification code. The learned unique identification code may be stored in a memory internal to the security controller **18'** or in an external memory, such as memory
 30 **36'**.

In addition, for certain cellular telephone systems, the frequency on which the cellular telephone

12 transmits may change from time-to-time, such as to avoid adjacent or co-channel interference. Accordingly, the receiver 15' may include a frequency scanning feature to scan the available frequencies to find the cellular telephone of interest as will also be appreciated by those skilled in the art. Of course, some cellular systems may not need such dynamic frequency reallocation, and the scanning portion would then not be needed.

10 The receiver 15' and the security controller 18' in accordance with the invention includes circuitry and/or software to enter the learning mode and learn the unique identification code or codes from the cellular telephone 12, so that the cellular telephone is then authorized to operate a designated vehicle function. Of course, other unique or coded signals could be transmitted from the cellular telephone 12 and learned by the receiver 15' and the security controller 18'. For example, the cellular telephone 12 could include a transmitter portion (not shown) like a conventional remote handheld vehicle security transmitter. The remote transmitter could also be carried in a flip out portion of a cellular telephone housing, for example. The learning mode may be entered by any of a number of methods as will be appreciated by those skilled in the art. In addition, the cellular telephone 12 could be voice activated so that the signals transmitted therefrom could be initiated without using the keypad 14.

30 Referring now to FIG. 2, another embodiment of the vehicle remote control system 10" includes a door lock controller 18" connected to the door locks 28". Operation of the door lock controller 18" is

similar to the security controller 18' and will not be discussed in great detail. However, when the door lock controller 18" is in the operating mode, the controller unlocks or locks the door locks 28" of the vehicle 16 responsive to signals received from the authorized cellular telephone 12. For example, pressing "1" and then "SEND" may unlock the doors of the vehicle 16, whereas pressing "2" and then "SEND" may lock the doors of the vehicle.

Referring now to FIG. 3, another embodiment of the vehicle remote control system 10''' includes an engine start controller 18''' connected to the vehicle's engine 38''. Operation of the engine start controller 18''' is similar to the security controller 18' and will not be discussed in great detail. However, when the engine start controller 18''' is in the operating mode, the controller starts the engine 38''' responsive to signals received from the authorized cellular telephone 12. For example, pressing "1" and then "SEND" may start the engine 38'''.

An alternate approach to the learning mode for entering the unique identification code from the cellular telephone 12 avoids the free space transmission of these signals. Many cellular telephones include a signal output jack so that a separate antenna and/or antenna and amplifier combination can be connected thereto, such as for connecting and operating a cellular telephone in a vehicle, for example.

In accordance with this aspect of the invention, an electrical connector 50''' is coupled to the engine start controller 18''' and cooperates

therewith via a cable **52** to permit the engine start controller to interface with the cellular telephone **12** to learn the codes from the cellular telephone. The engine start controller **18** can be temporarily
5 electrically connected to the output jack of the cellular telephone **12** to learn its unique identification code as described above. Alternatively, the cellular telephone **12** may be temporarily directly connected to the electrical connector **50** in lieu of
10 using the cable **52**. These variations of the invention, which are also applicable to the respective vehicle remote control systems illustrated in FIGS. 1-3, reduce the possibility of learning a code from an undesired telephone operating in proximity during learning of the
15 desired telephone.

A method aspect for vehicle remote control directly via a cellular telephone **12** without using intervening cellular communications infrastructure will now be discussed with reference to FIG. 5. As
20 discussed above, the cellular telephone **12** includes a keypad **14** and a transmitter for transmitting signals relating to a command code entered from the keypad and a unique identification code for the cellular telephone.

25 From the start (Block **60**) the method includes receiving signals directly from the cellular telephone **12** at the vehicle **16** without using intervening cellular communications infrastructure (Block **62**), and switching the controller **18** positioned at the vehicle **16** to a
30 learning mode and learning the unique identification code of a cellular telephone **12** so that the cellular telephone is an authorized cellular telephone at Block

64. The method further includes switching the controller 18 to an operating mode and controlling at least one vehicle function responsive to signals received from the authorized cellular telephone 12 at Block 66. The method ends at Block 68.

Another illustrative embodiment of a remote control system according to the invention is understood with reference to FIG. 6. The illustrated door opening system 70 includes a conventional overhead door opener 72, such as for a garage. The door opener 72, in turn, includes a motor 74 and receiver 75/door controller 76 as would be readily understood by one skilled in the art. An antenna 77 is connected to the receiver 75. The illustrated segmented garage door 78 is guided by a pair of opposing tracks, not shown.

More particularly, the door opening system is to be operated directly via a cellular telephone 12 without using intervening cellular communications infrastructure. The cellular telephone 12 includes a keypad 14 and a transmitter for transmitting signals relating to a command code entered from the keypad and a unique identification code for the cellular telephone.

The illustrated receiver 75 is associated at the door for receiving signals directly from the cellular telephone 12 without using intervening cellular communications infrastructure. The door controller 76 is switchable between a learning mode (via switch 80) and an operating mode. When the door controller 76 is in the learning mode, it learns the unique identification code of a cellular telephone so that the cellular telephone is an authorized cellular

telephone. When the door controller **76** is in the operating mode, it moves the door **78** between open and closed positions responsive to signals received from the authorized cellular telephone **12**.

5 Yet another illustrative embodiment of a remote control system **89** according to the invention is understood with reference to FIG. 7. The illustrated building security system **90** is to be operated directly via a cellular telephone **12** without using intervening
10 cellular communications infrastructure. The cellular telephone includes a keypad **14** and a transmitter for transmitting signals relating to a command code entered from the keypad and a unique identification code for the cellular telephone.

15 The building security system **90** comprises a receiver **105** positioned at the building **92** for receiving signals directly from the cellular telephone **12** without using intervening cellular communications infrastructure. An antenna **106** is connected to the
20 receiver **105**. A building controller **94** is connected to the receiver **105** and is switchable between a learning mode (via switch **108**) and an operating mode. When the building controller **94** is in the learning mode, it learns the unique identification code of a cellular
25 telephone so that the cellular telephone is an authorized cellular telephone. When the building controller **94** is in the operating mode, it grants access to the building **92** responsive to signals received from the authorized cellular telephone.

30 The building controller **94** is also connected to building sensors **112**. The building sensors **112** may be of a conventional switch or proximity sensor type as

will be appreciated by those skilled in the art. The building controller **94** is also connected to alarm indicators **114** and system indicators **116**. The alarm indicators **114** may include a local siren, or may
5 include a telephone dialing circuit to contact a remote monitoring station. The system indicators **116** may include any of a number indicators, such as lights, audible tone generators, etc.

The building controller **94** is switchable
10 between an armed mode for generating an alarm responsive to the building sensors **112**, and a disarmed mode. The building controller **94** is also connected to at least at least one door lock **120**, and wherein the building controller unlocks the door lock responsive to
15 the signals received from the authorized cellular telephone **12**.

Many modifications and other embodiments of the invention will come to the mind of one skilled in the art having the benefit of the teachings presented
20 in the foregoing descriptions and the associated drawings. Therefore, it is to be understood that the invention is not to be limited to the specific embodiments disclosed, and that modifications and embodiments are intended to be included within the
25 scope of the appended claims.